



Southern California Writers Association

# Writers News

www.ocwriter.com

Volume 10, Number 5.....May 2011

## May 21 Speaker

# Sheila Finch

Author, Teacher

## *“All You Ever Wanted to Know About Writing Short Stories in One Hour”*

Many people ask whether fiction writing can be taught, and Sheila Finch would be the first to say yes it can. To her credit, she’s seen dozens of her students publish short stories professionally in national and international publications. This has included magazines such as Asimov’s Science Fiction Magazine, Amazing Stories, and Reader’s Digest. Many have gone on to have their novels published by reputable publishers. Those of us that have been to writers’ conferences have routinely heard the name Sheila Finch come up when writers are asked who influenced them to become writers in the first place. Sheila has a solid reputation for ‘growing’ writers.

She recently retired from 28 years of teaching writing at El Camino College in Torrance. She has taught everything from fiction writing 101 to advanced workshops. At the request of her students, she continues to conduct writing seminars, critique groups and workshops. She has even been invited twice to teach fiction writing for Oxford University Discovery Programme aboard the Queen Mary 2.

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### Meeting Location:

#### Claim Jumper Restaurant

Banquet Room entrance, rear of building  
18050 Brookhurst St., Fountain Valley, CA  
Restaurant telephone: (714) 963-6711

Registration & Networking: 9:30 a.m.  
Meeting: 10:00 a.m.  
Lunch: 11:30 a.m.  
Afternoon Program: 12:30 p.m.



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# *President's Message*

## **Oh No, Opinions!**

How's are the goals and timeline working for you? Are you feeling a little more organized and productive? Is helping you to stay focused on the development of your book content? I hope so. Now it is time to Deliver your draft others that you may want to get input from like critique groups and subject matter experts to get the draft as clean as you can before you send it to your editor. The cleaner it is the less you will have to pay for editing services. This part of the process can be more iterative than other parts because you will probably be revising your work based on input.

Handing over your baby to others can be a very scary thing and, depending on which publishing route you choose to pursue, may be a little frustrating because of the input. This becomes a very personal decision. If you find a traditional publisher they will likely have more input than other publication approaches. So, again you have to remember why you are creating this work.

After your work is reviewed by your editor and other selected parties, you need to Evaluate the information and comments. This is the time to set aside your pride of authorship and open your mind to what can make your book better. However having said that, remember, those evaluating your book are individuals with their own opinion which may not be everyone's opinion. It is wise to take all input and look for common themes from a variety of sources. Determine the weight of the opinion based on the individual's knowledge or expertise. (Example: an editor will probably change words and punctuation because that is their expertise.) Do the suggestions make sense? Do the suggestions and edits change your intended message or story? Are you willing to live with the changes? How will not making the changes affect the success? Does that outcome matter to you? And so on.

After you evaluate the input, revise your content to include those things that make sense and improve your book. If you did you did your market research (business plan) and your creative content research, you should be able find a way to be true to the objective of your book.

After the final revisions are made and all of the other aspects of publishing have been determined and established - Congratulations! It is probably time to publish.

But it is not over yet...the final phase is Maintenance. See why next month.

**Attention all members!** In the June President's Spotlight, I would like to share short tidbits of information you have personally learned about the business side of writing. The tidbits can be helpful hints, good or not so good lesson's learned, mistakes you made, successes you found, etc. Please keep the description's short. This will be a good practice of your editing skills. Please do not use names to companies or people. Please let me know if you want your experience shared with your name attached or anonymously. Please submit your information to me at [president@ocwriter.com](mailto:president@ocwriter.com) no later than May 15th.

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April Highlights:  
MARIANA WILLIAMS  
“Winceworthy Tales Comes to SCWA”

Wince-Worthy Tales came to SCWA in April, hosted by Mariana Williams. Reflecting her success at The Moth Radio Hour, based in New York City, where she has won several storytelling contests, Williams encouraged members to step up to the microphone and tell their true stories, whether happy, embarrassing, puzzling, or whatever—but notable.

The Moth Radio Hour began in 2009 as collaboration with Atlantic Public Media and Public Radio Exchange (PRX). Now airing on more than 200 stations nationwide, The Moth recently won a 2010 Peabody Award, said to be the highest honor in journalism. The Peabody judges stated, “Storytelling, likely the oldest art, is revered and reinvigorated by this hour for everyday raconteurs.” (It’s also a great reservoir of ideas for writing! See [www.prx.org/themoth](http://www.prx.org/themoth).)

Mariana Williams selected the Long Beach Playhouse as a venue storytelling event on April 3, 2011. The 100-strong crowd was double the expectations. The winner, “Tom-Cruise handsome,” Williams says, was a Marine with a war combat story. Now an attorney, the Marine gave his \$100 prize to the first place poet, a young woman “who needed it.” The next meeting is July 6 at the Regency Theater in San Juan Capistrano. (See Larry Poricelli for more information.)

At SCWA, Ms. Williams began a story about “massage envy,” when she and a girlfriend signed up for massages at a place that made her unsure what its real business was. She left the audience hanging to call upon members for their stories, but gradually finished the story.

Polly Dunn told a story set in 1977, “the era of free love,” in which she came home to find some extra green plants at her place, near the hydrangeas and snapdragons. Her husband and his buddy had de-weeded a bin behind a grocery store and were bustling around with empty sandwich bags, two cookie baking sheets, rolling papers, and a hot oven. Polly’s “Carrie Nation” side took over. The mysterious plants turned out to be genuine weeds. Her conclusion: “We need to remove our own weeds before they take over the whole garden.”

Dava White told a story from 1977-78 of a twelve-hour plane flight from the Middle East. Roy King told a story about playing co-ed slow-pitch baseball. After consuming chicken wings and beer before the game, he found the bathroom was locked for cleaning. He started in the game anyway. Finally desperate, he sneaked into the large bushes behind first base. Guess where the next hit went. Carol, who writes a column for a Santa Monica Newspaper, told a story of urging the public to go carless and to bike to work at least one day a week. There was even a Bike Caucus that urged Congressmen to bike on Capitol Hill. Twenty percent ride one mile or less; 40% travel two miles or less. Only an ounce or two of gas are saved by each.

Larry Poricelli recounted the ups and downs of his life. Here are the downs: Something “not quite a headache” became a brain aneurysm. Larry “died on the table” during surgery. Three days later he woke up, thinking he was in Vegas. Another time when he was picking flowers, a rattler bit him. The hospital had no anti-venom, but in three hours the swelling in his hand and arm went down. On another occasion, a motorcycle accident threw him over the road’s edge onto stacked lumber that crumbled because of dry rot, leaving Poricelli alive once more. The last disaster was his being rear-ended while driving. “Lar Dog” realizes how lucky he’s been.

Sonia Marsh recounted the move of her family with three sons to Belize by the Caribbean for several years. The expectation of “making love in Paradise” was replaced by scorpions, insect-eco systems on the floors, bugs enmeshed in mosquito nets, and heat without air-conditioning. She became a “local.” To counter the bad smells, she had to spray perfume into her nostrils.

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# NEXT MONTH'S SPEAKER: LAURIE TOM

June 18, 2011



L. Ron Hubbard's Writers of the Future Contest has long been considered a staple of the Science Fiction and Fantasy genres. Coming in first place in this contest can mean the beginning of a career for an aspiring writer. Laurie is a fantasy and science fiction writer and winner of the 2010 L. Ron Hubbard's Writers of the Future Gold Award. Her winning story "Living Rooms" appears in the Writers of the Future Volume XXVI anthology, which is now on sale on Amazon, Borders, and Barnes & Noble. She also has an upcoming story in StoryPortals.com.

In her speech to the SCWA, Laurie explores the importance of writing contests in building name recognition and credibility in a writing career.

Neil Young  
VP, Programming  
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GUESTS ALWAYS WELCOME--\$35 AT DOOR; \$30 WITH RSVP  
MEMBERS WHO DO NOT RSVP PAY \$30 AT DOOR  
MEMBERS WHO DO RSVP PAY \$25

## Executive Committee

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Sonia Marsh, meeting@ocwriter.com  
or message (949) 309-0030

*Williams, cont. from page 3*

Mark told of when he was four and his mother was in the hospital with his newborn little brother. He and a cousin were messing around on the bed with a 22-pistol, trying to explode small balloons. Mark got shot in the shoulder and was rushed bleeding, to the hospital by his very stressed father. A series of X-rays showed no bullet. Later the slug was found next to the bed at home. It had ricocheted off Mark's bone.

Kathy told of winning a ticket through a radio station for a concert at an undisclosed location, but it was to be televised. There was festival atmosphere but with a loud, anxious crowd dressed in black. The mysterious star turned out to be Bruce Springsteen.

Iain Woods described moving from England to America where "anything can happen. At Woods's residence in NY, a Bulgarian named Ziggy had died shortly before. Woods began glimpsing a ghost and hearing its bumps and other noises. Even though scared, he knew he had "to have it out with my fate." He confronted the ghost sightings and sounds. Nothing there. Quiet reigned for six weeks; then Woods saw the shadow on the landing. Mysteriously, it never returned.

The Moth Radio Hour is supported by the Corp. for Public Broadcasting, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Glenda Brown Rynn, reporter  
[grynn@cox.net](mailto:grynn@cox.net)

*Finch, cont. from page 1*

Sheila Finch is also an award-winning author of eight science fiction novels. Her novel, *Infinity's Web*, received the Compton Crook award and her young adult book, *Tiger in the Sky*, won the 1999 San Diego Book award for best juvenile fiction. In 1998, she won the Nebula Award for her novella, "Reading The Bones." Sheila's work has been collected in numerous anthologies and she's a regular contributor to *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*. Her works have won 1998 Nebula Novella Award, The Compton Crook Award for first novels, and 1999 San Diego Book Award for Best Young Adult Novel.

For her SCWA appearance in May, Sheila has promised us an interactive morning "All You Ever Wanted to Know About Writing Short Stories in About an Hour." In this speech, Sheila has asked that everyone in attendance bring writing paper and be ready for an in-depth discussion on getting those creative juices flowing!

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